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REPORT

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES • FALL 1991

Cockfighting's "Super Bowl" Raided in Ohio

In May, investigators from the South Central Regional Office (SCRO) and the Great Lakes Regional Office of The Humane Society of the United States joined representatives from the Ohio Department of Agriculture, four Ohio sheriff's departments, and the Internal Revenue Service, and other officials in carrying out two major cockfighting raids. Held simultaneously in two rural southern Ohio counties, these raids were among the largest and most successful actions taken against cockfighters in recent history. One of the events was the "Buckeye 300," which is considered the "Super Bowl" of cockfighting. A total of almost 800 gamecocks were confiscated and more than 400 people were charged with a variety of offenses ranging from watching or participating in cockfights to weapons violations. Cock-

fighting is a misdemeanor in Ohio.

Ohio is not part of the South Central region, but HSUS Great Lakes office staff asked Jim Tedford, SCRO program coordinator, to assist it because of the size and scope of the raids planned.

"The level of organization was one of the most striking features of these [cockfighting] events," said Tedford. At the "Buckeye 300" a half-dead gamecock was found in the snack-bar trash can. "It is incredible that anyone can watch or participate in such carnage in the name of entertainment," said Tedford in describing the bloody fights to the death that had taken place.

Cockfighting is prevalent throughout the South Central region and the country. Most existing state laws are weak (see the *continued on page 3*)

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Evaluating Local Humane Societies

Many animal-protection and -control agencies want to provide the highest quality of animal care possible but simply do not know where to begin. One major function of the SCRO is to provide guidance to grassroots organizations. The SCRO has assisted a number of groups throughout the region in improving and updating their programs and facilities. Increased professionalism in a shelter is almost always followed by higher staff morale and an improved public image.

Recently, the SCRO was contacted by the board of directors of the Knox County Humane Society (KCHS) in Knoxville, Tennessee. This organization, the oldest humane society in the state, was considering kicking off a capital campaign to raise funds for a new shelter. SCRO Director Phillip Snyder was asked to provide formal evaluation of KCHS facilities and programs. Among the many areas he covered during his evaluation were shelter accessibility, services and hours, physical *continued on page 4*



Robin Weirauch of the HSUS Great Lakes office helps to identify dead birds found after a cockfighting raid in Ohio. SCRO staff also took part in the raid.

Stronger State Laws Needed Against Cockfighting

Often cockfighters will argue that their "sport" is a quaint relic that is part of American history. Like slavery, however, cockfighting is a practice that has no place in a civilized society.

This blood sport pits roosters equipped with razor-sharp gaffs attached to their legs against one another in a fight to the death. Not only are these events cruel, but they often involve gambling, illegal weapons, drugs, and violence as well. A surprisingly large number of children are often present.

Sixteen states have made cockfighting a felony offense. None of the four states in the South Central region (Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) has taken such a strong stand. It is critical that lawmakers hear from constituents opposed to cockfighting. The HSUS believes that cockfighting should be a felony offense in every state. Below is a summary of cockfighting laws by state. All need to be strengthened.

■ **KENTUCKY**—Last year, Kentucky Attorney General Fred Cowan ruled that, due to a technicality, cockfighting is in all probability legal in Kentucky. In 1980, John Y. Brown, then the governor, vetoed a bill designed to exempt birds from the state's anticruelty statute. The veto was mistakenly registered one day late. In the

opinion of the attorney general, this technicality appears to legalize cockfighting and deprives all birds of protection in Kentucky. It is extremely important that legislation be introduced in the 1992 session of the state legislature to reverse this mistake!

■ **NORTH CAROLINA**—The statute (Sec. 14-362) states that "a person who instigates, promotes, conducts, is employed at, allows property under his ownership or control to be used for, participates as a spectator at, or profits from an exhibition featuring the fighting of a cock is guilty of a misdemeanor and is punishable by imprisonment for up to six months and a fine of up to five hundred dollars."

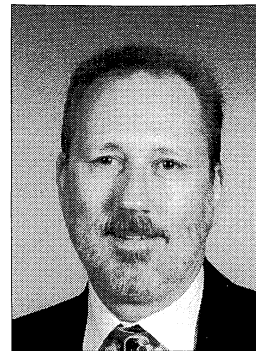
Under North Carolina law, fighting of other animals, including dogs, is also only a misdemeanor!

■ **TENNESSEE**—In Tennessee, cockfighting was once upgraded to a felony only to be reduced to a misdemeanor within a few months. Currently Sec. 39-14-203 of the *Tennessee Code Annotated* states that participation in cockfights is a Class A misdemeanor which carries a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or a prison term of not greater than eleven months, twenty-nine days. Being a spectator is punishable by a fine of up to \$50 and/or up to thirty days in jail. *continued on page 4*



Roosters are allowed to fight to the death in organized competitions. Stronger laws against cockfighting are needed in all four states in the South Central region.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENT



Phillip Snyder

By Phillip Snyder

Seldom does a day go by in which the SCRO is not called upon by a frustrated individual in a panic about a "nearly hopeless" situation at the local animal shelter or pound. These complaints, ranging from

horrible shelter conditions to inhumane animal destruction, seem to be exacerbated by an attitude of indifference on the part of local officials. Very often our callers claim, "This county is different from all others," "No one here cares," or "I'm about to give up—please help!"

Do not give up! You can make a difference. Several of you have proven that to be true in your local areas. McMinn County, Tennessee, Morehead, Kentucky, and Craven County, North Carolina, are only a few of the communities in which animal welfare has made great progress due to the initial efforts of one individual. Compassion and dedication, in these cases, seem to have been contagious: folks who felt quite alone suddenly found themselves surrounded by others who shared their concerns.

With assistance from the SCRO, individuals are encouraged to seek improvements by pushing for enforcement of existing laws, rallying support for new legislation, keeping the media informed, and organizing local animal-protection groups.

Organized community-based efforts have proven to be successful in convincing local officials of the need and demand for change. Humane legislation, improved shelter conditions, and better overall protection of animals have resulted in every case.

If you live in a community where animal protection seems to be a "lost cause," don't give up. We won't tell you it will be easy to change things or that it will happen overnight, but it will happen. Call the staff of the SCRO. We can help you make a difference!



A caged bear awaits its sale at an exotic-animal auction. A new Tennessee law will prohibit possession of many wild species, including those dangerous to humans; The HSUS hopes a decrease in demand will lead to a decline in the supply of such animals.

Tennessee Law Prohibits Exotic Animals as Pets

A few years ago, the Tennessee legislature passed a law governing ownership of exotic animals. Under the statute, it was quite simple for an individual to qualify for a permit to keep wild animals as pets. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency was given the responsibility for enforcing the new law but no additional training, funding, or personnel. Within months, a youngster in the Nashville area was fatally attacked by her father's leopards. The animals subsequently escaped and at least one had to be shot.

The HSUS is opposed to private ownership of wild animals, especially those considered dangerous. Very few people are equipped to maintain any wild animals properly in a home environment. When owners of such animals understandably become disenchanted with them, the problem of appropriate and humane disposal inevitably arises.

In the 1991 legislative session in Tennessee, a new law was passed to prohibit possession of Class I wildlife (including all species inherently dangerous to humans) by private individuals. Sec. 70-4-404 (c)(1) of the *Tennessee Code Annotated* now reads in part: "After the effective date of this part, no new animals shall be brought into possession under authority

of a personal-possession permit." Persons who owned Class I animals prior to the effective date of the new law will be allowed to reapply once a year for permits to maintain only those animals and up to three of their offspring. Although commercial breeders can still legally operate, they will no longer be able to market their exotic animals in Tennessee. We hope a decrease in the demand for exotic pets will result in a decline in the supply of such animals.

The SCRO applauds the Tennessee General Assembly for taking this bold step in protecting animals and citizens.

"Super Bowl" Bust

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article on page 2). Misdemeanor-level penalties don't provide an adequate deterrent to cockfighters or adequate incentives to law-enforcement officials to pursue many investigations of animal fighting. Although it is disheartening to know that cockfighting is found throughout the South Central region, The HSUS will continue to do all in its power to stop this barbaric activity.

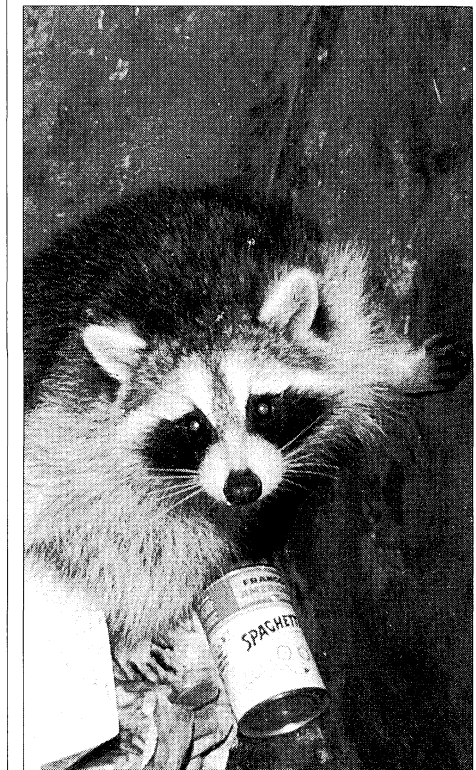
Workshop on Urban Wildlife Planned

On April 3, 1992, the SCRO and our cosponsor, the North Carolina Animal/Rabies Control Association, will host a workshop entitled "Humane Solutions to Problems with Urban Wildlife."

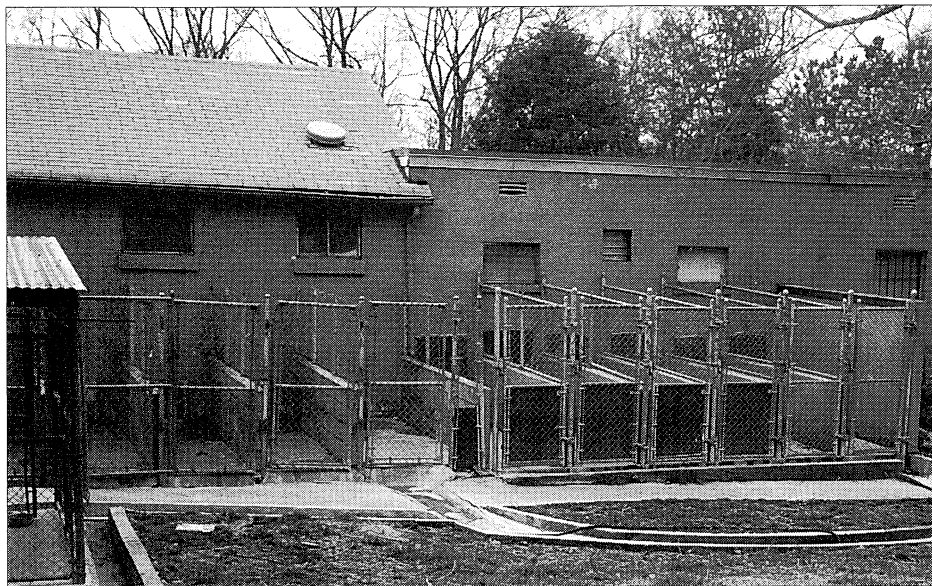
Cities and towns have become important habitats for wildlife. Wild animals sometimes den in human dwellings, yards, or gardens and damage property.

The HSUS has developed a program on humane methods of resolving problems involving wildlife in the urban environment. It is designed for animal-control officers, wildlife rehabilitators, humane society workers, and others who deal with complaints about nuisance wildlife.

The workshop will be held at the Holiday Inn Four Seasons, 3121 High Point Rd. at I-40, Greensboro, NC 27407. For registration information, please contact the SCRO.



Control of raccoons, one of the most common of urban wildlife species, is part of the "Humane Solutions to Wildlife Problems" workshop planned for 1992.



An evaluation of shelter facilities was part of Phillip Snyder's review of the Knox County Humane Society's operations. Many HSUS recommendations are being implemented.

Shelter Evaluations

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plant, animal housing, food and food storage, euthanasia, adoptions, disease control, equipment, and recordkeeping. In his conclusions and recommendations, Snyder wrote, "[The organization] should strive to provide a high quality of care for shelter animals and to become acknowledged as a strong voice for animals and a respected animal-protection organization in the

community."

Vicky Crosetti, executive director of the KCHS, followed up on the evaluation with a detailed list of corrective actions that were to be taken immediately. New signs have been purchased, staff training has been expanded, and available space is being used more efficiently. A significant step taken toward disease prevention was implementation of a shelter-animal vaccination program.

Improvements within KCHS facilities and programs are continuing.

Reflect for a moment . . .

HOW CAN I HELP ANIMALS EVEN WHEN I NO LONGER SHARE THEIR WORLD?

By your bequest for animal protection to The Humane Society of the United States, your will can provide for animals after you're gone. Naming The HSUS demonstrates your lasting commitment to animal welfare and strengthens the society for this task. We will be happy to send information about our animal programs and material that will assist you in planning a will.

Please send will information to:

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Mail in confidence to Murdaugh S. Madden, Vice President/Senior Counsel, The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

HSUS Animal Care Expo '92 Scheduled

Plan now to travel to Las Vegas, Nevada, February 2-5 to attend a one-of-a-kind expo for animal-sheltering, -care, and -control professionals. Sponsored by The HSUS, Animal Care Expo '92 will feature seminars, demonstrations, and the latest in practical, contemporary, and humane equipment and services. Special emphasis will be given to environmentally friendly and energy-efficient products and supplies. Contact the SCRO for more details.

Fall Workshop Planned

The SCRO will sponsor a workshop in Nashville, Tennessee, November 8-9, 1991, cosponsored by the Tennessee Humane Association and the Animal Control Association of Tennessee. The first day will be devoted to cruelty investigations; the second to topics including dangerous dogs and ritual animal sacrifice. For details, please contact the SCRO.

Stronger Laws

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■ **VIRGINIA**—Sec. 3.1-796.125 of Virginia law states, "Any person engaging in the fighting of cocks or other animals, except dogs, for money, prize, or anything of value, or betting or wagering money or anything of value on the result of such fight, shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor." Participation is only illegal if gambling can be proven! Attendance is only illegal where an admission fee is charged. This is a very weak law that fails completely to address the animal-cruelty aspect of cockfighting.

For more information on what you can do to stop cockfighting, contact the SCRO.